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Jeff Hearty rides alone in the Pony Express re-enactment. Riders rode two-mile stretches, and the trails were more asphalt than earth.

Pony Express riders — now including women — re-create legendary mail run

By Sharon Haddock
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6-10-01

FAIRFIELD, Utah County — The red-shirted young men galloping along the dusty Western trails Saturday across Utah differed from the Pony Express riders of 1860.

Some were women.

They only rode for two-mile stretches instead of 60 miles and the trails they followed were more often asphalt than earth.

But the reasons for riding are strikingly similar.

"I do this for fun. It's hard but I knew pretty much how it'd be," said Raymond Miles, 18, of Tooele, waiting to take his second ride of the day.

"I would've liked to be one of them."

"I love it," said Colby Castagno, 18 and also from Tooele. "I got into this at 14 and I talked him (Miles) into doing it."

The riders of today face different challenges along the route — which actually started in St. Joseph, Mo., and

will end 10 days and 1,900 miles later in Sacramento, Calif. Between 1860 and 1861, the turnaround time was the same, except when bad weather in Utah slowed the mail and it took up to 16 days.

Instead of watching out for savages and lawless bandits, the riders watch for potholes, cracks in the concrete, speeding cars and debris in the road.

So they still carry a pocketbook Bible for courage, good luck and Godspeed, just like in the old days.

"Today you have more things that spook the horses," Castagno said. "I had some lion statues the other day that scared my horse pretty bad."

Riders sometimes have police escorts and almost always draw crowds.

Sometimes, when they get ahead of schedule, they're expected to stop and talk with their fans or face the glare of television cameras, somewhat of an ordeal for a taciturn cowboy.

A film crew from the National Geographic cable television show tried to

interview Thomas Brown as he rode into Fairfield Saturday.

"That never happened in the old days. These guys were running to beat a deadline to move the machila," said one member of the Utah Pony Express Association, gathered at the Camp Floyd/Stagecoach Inn State Park to watch the handoff.

"They wouldn't let girls ride back then, either," said Bridgett Atkin, a staff member with the Bureau of Land Management who also rides with the association.

Atkin said the letters in the saddlebags are real pieces of mail, often purchased as commemorative gifts for people at the other end of the line.

"This is a good opportunity to remember the important historic events like the Pony Express," Atkin said. "While it only lasted 19 months, it impacted development in a big way. The stations where they stopped became towns, for instance."

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Budget shift threatens West's Co

Jennifer Toomer-Cook

Heret News staff writer

Facing accreditation warnings, West High School is axing funding for an at-risk student program so it can hire more teachers.

The budget shift appears to come from Colors of Success. But program director Duane Bourdeaux is not giving up yet. Bourdeaux, a Democratic legislator from Salt Lake City, hopes to raise around \$20,000 from private sources to prevent Colors of Success from fading. He says he has commitments from at least one local business and will write letters to others.

He also plans to ask the school board for help.

"Being a lawmaker, I know what education is faced with" in terms of limited funding, Bourdeaux said Thursday. "Obviously, you hate to see something go, so I'm going to do my best to get the resources we need."

Colors of Success teams at-risk students with adults who help shepherd them through school or other life pressures and crises. The program began at West in 1989 and spread to 19 schools, 15 of which are in Salt Lake City School District.

The program receives state funding; individual school bud-

gets pay matching funds. Salt Lake District, which faces budget shortfalls next year, pays for Newman and Hawthorne elementary.

Last winter, the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges issued an accreditation warning to West, mainly because teachers had too many students. Highland (also in Salt Lake City District), Cyprus, Grantsville, Juab, Kearns, Layton, Sky View, Snow Canyon and South Sevier high schools also received warnings.

The State Board of Education wants Northwest to re-examine its teacher class load standards. Utah schools' block schedules

inherently bump class loads to around 180 students per teacher if each class has 30 students. Northwest's standard is 160 students per teacher.

In the meantime, schools that have been warned they must devise plans to follow the rule.

Highland does not plan to cut programs to meet accreditation standards, principal Ken Powell said. It is trying to better use

Home schooling preferable to alternatives, group told

Will Bettmann

Heret News staff writer

America's public schools have "dumbed our children down, drugged them up and kicked them out," said Ezola Foster, the keynote speaker at a large home-schooling convention at the University of Utah Saturday.

Foster may have been a little more outspoken in her criticism than many at the Utah Home Education Association's (HEA) 21st annual convention and fair, but almost all of the 100 people at the convention agreed with Foster's assertion that home schooling was preferable to the alternatives.

school. They're still their kids' primary teacher."

Barney Madsen, a lawyer from Sandy, said he and his wife turned to home schooling their four children in 1993 when they became frustrated with the public school system.

"We'd been living in England for three years," Madsen said. "We moved to Fairfax County, Va., which is supposed to have the best public schools in the country. But the more I got involved, the more frustrated I became. Our oldest son, Jed, wanted to work ahead of where his class was, but he couldn't. He just had to do busywork until the rest of the class caught up."

of 18-year-olds who do that. Also, Jed is so much brighter than I was at his age, and it's because he's read so much."

Morgan, Lauren and Caty Shaw of Las Vegas, who are in 10th, eighth and sixth grades, agreed with Madsen that home schooling allowed them more freedom to learn.

"I went to public school until fourth grade," said Morgan. "But I like home schooling better because I can choose what I want to learn, and study at my own pace."

Morgan added that she got plenty of socializing from friends, children in the neighborhood and church. She said she loved "family time" in the

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